BACKGROUNDER 1-0405 MARCH 19, 1976
SPLANE/MIAMI 532P

MURMANSK-JACKSONVILLE: SISTER CITIES

INTRO:

THREE OFFICIALS FROM THE SOVIET CITY OF MURMANSK WILL SPEND THE WEEK OF MARCH TWENTY-SECOND IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA -- A VISIT UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL SISTER CITIES PROGRAM. VOA CORRESPONDEN RUSSELL SPLANE HAS SOME OF THE BACKGROUND IN THIS REPORT FROM MIAMI:

TEXT:

IT WAS BACK IN NINETEEN FIFTY SIX WHEN THE MAN WHO WAS THEN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES -- DWIGHT EISENHOWER -- PROPOSED SOMETHING HE CALLED THE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROGRAM. HIS AIM WAS TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND TO CEMENT RELATIONS BETWEEN COUNTRIES -- NOT AT THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL -- BUT IN THE HUMAN TERMS OF PERSONAL CONTACT.

OUT OF THIS GREW THE PRESENT SISTER CITIES PROGRAM WHICH LINKS CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES IN AN INFORMAL PARTNERSHIP WITH CITIES OVERSEAS.

THE UNOFFICIAL AFFILIATIONS -- WHICH PAIR ANY TWO CITIES UNDER THIS PROGRAM -- ARE BASED ON MUTUAL INTERESTS, SIMILARITY IN ECONOMIC OR OTHER CHARACTERISTICS, AND HISTORICAL TIES. THE FORMER MAYOR OF LOS ANGELES -- THE CITY WHICH HOLDS THE U.S. RECORD FOR THE MOST SISTER CITY TIES -- MORE THAN A DOZEN -- ONCE DESCRIBED THE AIMS OF THE PROGRAM IN THESE SIMPLE TERMS: "WITH NO PLACE IN THE WORLD FURTHER AWAY THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS BY AIR, WE'RE ALL NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS AND IT'S TIME WE GOT ACQUAINTED FOR OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT."

TODAY, SISTER CITIES, INTERNATIONAL -- THE PRIVATELY FUNDED ORGANIZATION THAT DIRECTS THIS WORLDWIDE EFFORT -- REPORTS THAT FIVE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE CITIES IN FORTY-SIX U.S. STATES ARE

LINKED WITH SEVEN HUNDRED FORTY-TWO CITIES IN SEVENTY-SEVEN COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

THIS COMING WEEK, TWO OF THESE CITIES WILL BE ENGAGED IN THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND THE GESTURES OF FRIENDSHIP THAT ARE AT THE HEART OF THIS PROGRAM. THE CITIES ARE MURMANSK IN THE FAR NORTH OF THE SOVIET UNION, AND JACKSONVILLE IN THE U.S. SOUTHERN STATE OF FLORIDA.

LAST YEAR -- AFTER THE PARTNERSHIP WAS FORMED -- FIVE CITIZENS OF JACKSONVILLE JOURNEYED TO MURMANSK TO LAUNCH THE PROGRAM. THIS COMING WEEK, THREE OFFICIALS OF MURMANSK WILL PAY AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO JACKSONVILLE. THE VISITORS WILL BE VIKTOR ROMANENKO, THE MAYOR OF MURMANSK; YURIY BATOV, IDENTIFIED AS THE BRIGADIER OF MURMANSK DOCKERS, AND YURIY LOBANOV, AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN MURMANSK. THEY'LL VISIT CITY OFFICES, INSPECT INDUSTRIAL SITES, LOOK AT THE CITY'S SCHOOLS AND VISIT SOME OF JACKSONVILLE'S SHOPPING CENTERS. THEY'LL WIND UP THEIR TOUR OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA NEXT WEEKEND WITH A VISIT TO SAINT AUGUSTINE -- THE OLDEST CITY IN THE U.S. -- AND TO THE FAMED DISNEY WORLD IN ORLANDO.

OTHER SISTER CITY TIES LINKING THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE SEATTLE AND TASHKENT, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA AND NAKHODKA; AND BALTIMORE AND ODESSA. (SIGNED)

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